

Remarks

The Applicant requests reconsideration and reexamination of the above-identified patent application, with amendment. Claims 1, 3, 5-10, 12, and 14-18 are pending in this application upon entry of this Amendment. In this Amendment, the Applicant has amended claims 1, 3, 5-7, 10, 12, and 14-16; and cancelled claims 2, 4, 11, and 13. No new claims have been added in this Amendment. Claims 1 and 10 are independent claims.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner objected to claims 4-5, 7, 13-14, and 16 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 4 depends from claim 2 which depends from independent claim 1. The Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to include the limitations of claims 2 and 4. Thus, amended independent claim 1 is allowable. Claims 3 and 5-9 presented herein depend from amended independent claim 1 and are therefore also allowable.

Claim 13 depends from claim 11 which depends from independent claim 10. The Applicant has amended independent claim 10 to include the limitations of claims 11 and 13. Thus, amended independent claim 10 is allowable. Claims 12 and 14-18 presented herein depend from amended independent claim 10 and are therefore also allowable.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 8-10, and 17-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by FR 2,774,740 (“Nicot”) (corresponds to U.S. Patent No. 6,427,542). The Applicant respectfully traverses. However, in the interest of expediting allowance of this application, the Applicant has amended the claims as indicated above such that claims 1, 8-10, and 17-18 presented herein are allowable. The Applicant reserves the right to prosecute claims

the same as or similar to rejected claims 1, 8-10, and 17-18 in a continuing application such as a continuation.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 2-3 and 11-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nicot. The Examiner rejected claims 6 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nicot in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,269,702.

Claims 2 and 11 have been cancelled. As indicated above, the Applicant has amended the claims such that claims 3 and 12 presented herein are allowable. The Applicant reserves the right to prosecute claims the same as or similar to rejected claims 2-3 and 11-12 in a continuing application such as a continuation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, claims 1, 3, 5-10, 12, and 14-18 presented herein meet the substantive requirements for patentability. The case is in appropriate condition for allowance. Accordingly, such action is respectfully requested. If a conference would expedite allowance or resolve any further questions, such a conference is invited at the convenience of the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,

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